

The Meaning of Faculty Development

— Thoughts on the 15th Rikkyo TEFL Seminar —

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The 15th Rikkyo TEFL Seminar — Faculty Development Workshop — was held in September 2003. This is one of two annual seminars organized by the Unified Curriculum English Programme which are invaluable occasions for the exchanging of ideas and insights among the English teachers at Rikkyo University. There are about 120 English teachers who are engaged in the English Programme and on average between 60 and 80 attend the Seminar.

The proceedings vary depending on the information which is to be shared by teachers and curriculum coordinators. Each seminar begins with up-dates regarding the courses and class syllabuses ; however, special events, such as demonstrations by publishers of the assigned textbooks and other kinds of workshops, are also planned. We have had sessions to learn how to use the language laboratories efficiently or how to use a web information search system, for example. After the main events we divide ourselves into groups and discuss classroom problems and exchange teaching tips. In spring, a delicious buffet is offered after the whole event has finished, and in autumn a nice break over Starbucks' hot coffee and biscuits is prepared.

Sometimes adjunct lecturers from the Language Center are asked to give presentations on their experiences of teaching classes in the programme, so that not only new teachers but also experienced teachers can share their insights on how to organize classes. At one of these annual events I had the honor of being a presenter.

The title of my report was — 'An Application of Web Page Making to English Writing in R&W I Class'. The main focus was to report on an experimental teaching approach that I had implemented in an English writing class. This class was held at Niiza campus and there were 35 students enrolled. Simply stated, I took the students into the computer room and taught them basic academic writing

skills through the making of a personal web page.

Web page making is much easier than many people may imagine. All you need is a computer connected to the Internet, a word processing program, a program to upload web pages to the web space, and an internet browser. In case of Rikkyo University, all the computers on campus are equipped with the following programs : Microsoft 'Word', FFFTP, and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Each student also has a personal web space that is automatically allocated to them once registered at the university.

With recent developments in word processing software, making a simple web page is as easy as writing a normal document. The only difference is that instead of saving the text in document format (.doc) , you save it in web page format (.html or .htm) . You can change the background color, the font size, face and color, center the text, and add graphics just like you do when using the word processor normally. Once you make a top page for your web site, a few clicks of the mouse are all that is required to find your first page on the web space. If you wish to make your site more attractive, you can add as many pages as you like through the use of hyperlinks.

The feedback I obtained from my students after this experiment was quite welcoming. I asked them to answer a questionnaire about how they felt about the process, how they evaluated the class, etc. . at the end of the spring semester in 2003. They seem to have felt that the activities were quite challenging since they had to learn how to make a web page through the medium of English (In the Rikkyo English Programme the language for instruction is basically supposed to be English only) . Most of them evaluated the class as highly meaningful, commenting that 'we are living in an international era' and that 'we should be able to publish information on the web in English'.

The Rikkyo TEFL Seminars give us an occasion to know what other teachers are doing in their classrooms as well as fostering interest in new teaching methods. Since joining the Language Center I have acquired many teaching tips by attending these seminars. As there are always some teachers who are assigned the same subjects, we can always find someone with whom to share ideas about the specific problems that typically arise on each course. Just as students need good instruction, teachers also need good support to develop their teaching methodologies.

There are two main areas that emerge as topics for discussion. One concerns the administrative side of the curriculum, covering topics such as the unified evaluation policy and the specifications of the course syllabuses, etc. Clear-cut answers are usually available for the questions asked in such sessions. The other area relates more to the pedagogical side of the curriculum, and teachers often ask for advice on how to support students who can not concentrate on studying, or how we can teach certain skills more effectively in our classes. There are no finite answers to these kinds of questions ; therefore, we have to make efforts to seek improvements in our teaching continually.

One role of the seminars that I feel is becoming increasingly important is the sharing ideas about new technologies for foreign language teaching and learning. English is different from other foreign language teaching in that we are always exposed to the first wave of new innovations. As the world is becoming more globalized and English becomes the quasi lingua franca, English teachers are somehow regarded by students as being experts in new technologies.

“English teachers have to be almighty.” That’s the idea students generally have of us. We have to be nice, always smiling and chatting in fluent English, and have to be able to bring the breath of civilization into the classroom earlier than any other teachers. In order not to betray the mission I have to shoulder, I need the help of my colleagues to enlighten myself. The Seminar is exactly the place that satisfies this need.

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